

What is claimed is:

1. An application provision system for use in a server, the server being connectable to a network that comprises at least one client and at least one server, the application provision system comprising:

a server resident process for controlling the provision of an application to a client; and

client-server functionality that is deliverable to the client, the client-server functionality the provision of the application to the client by communicating with the server resident process.

2. An application provision system according to claim 1 wherein the server resident process includes a common gateway interface.

3. An application provision system according to claim 1 wherein the client server functionality is a platform independent executable program attached to a web page.

4. An application provision system according to claim 3 wherein the platform independent executable program is a Java applet.

5. An application provision system for use in a server, the server being connectable to a network that comprises at least one client and at least one server, the client comprising an operating system and a browser, the application provision system comprising:

a server resident process which is able to respond to queries;

a deliverable file that is deliverable to the client, the file including a platform independent executable program and parameter information; and

a means for establishing a communications link for providing communications between the server resident process and the operating system of the client the server resident process is able to perform operations within the operating system of the client.

6. An application provision system according to claim 5 further comprising a database comprising information for the locating of files associated with an application that can be installed on the client.

5 7. An application provision system according to claim 5 wherein the application provision system further comprises;

at least one file associated with at least one application wherein the application is installable on the client; and

at least one web page for downloading to the browser located on the client.

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8. An application provision system according to claim 5 wherein the file deliverable to the client includes a Java applet.

9. An application provision system according to claim 5 wherein the server resident processes includes a common gateway interface.

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10. An application provision system according to claim 5 wherein the server resident process, client deliverable file and at least one file associated with the at least one application are located on the same server.

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11. An application provision system according to claim 5 wherein the server resident process, client deliverable file and at least one file associated with the at least one application are located on different servers that are both elements of the same network.

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12. A web page for delivery from a server to a browser operating on a client, the server and client being comprised by a network comprising at least one client and at least one server, the server comprising server based processes for automatic provision of an application, the web page for use in a system for the automatic provision of an application to the client, the web page comprising:

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a platform independent executable program for the provision of communications

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between the client and server based processes; and

parameter information wherein the parameter information is sufficient to initiate the server based processes and to determine if an application is installed on the client.

5 13. A web page according to claim 10 wherein the platform independent executable program is a Java applet.

14. A method of providing a requested application from a server to a client by an application provision system, the method comprising the steps of:

10 providing a first web page to a client, the first web page containing at least one link that can be selected wherein the link is associated with a document;

receiving a request for a document by a server based process, from a client;

providing a second web page to a client, the second web having client server functionality attached to it which requests an application to access the requested document; and

15 providing the requested application to the client wherein the requested application allows the client to access the requested document.

20 15. A method for providing a requested application according to claim 14 wherein the step of providing the application provides the entire application to the client.

16. A method for providing a requested application according to claim 14 wherein the step of providing the application provides selected files associated with the application to the client to update an existing instance of the application on the client.

25 17. A method of receiving a requested application from a server to a client by an application provision system, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a first web page from a server, the first web page containing at least one link that can be selected wherein the link is associated with a document;

30 providing a request for a document to a server based process, from a client;

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receiving a second web page from a server, the second web having client server functionality attached to it which requests an application to access the requested document; and

receiving the requested application from the server wherein the requested application allows the client to access the requested document.

18. A method for receiving a requested application according to claim 17 wherein the step of receiving the application receives the entire application from the client.

19. A method for receiving a requested application according to claim 17 wherein the step of receiving the application receives selected files associated with the application from the server to update an existing instance of the application on the client.

20. A method for providing a requested application by a server to a client connected to a network comprising at least one client and at least one server; the server comprising at least one web page for downloading by the at least one client, the method comprising the steps of:

providing client-server functionality and a server resident process on a server;
delivering the client-server functionality to the client during the downloading of a web page to which the client-server functionality is attached;
receiving by way of the server resident process a request for an application from the client, through the client-server functionality; and
providing by way of the server resident process the requested application to the client, through the client-server functionality.

21. A method for the automatic provision of a requested application from a server to a client; the server and client being elements of a network including at least one client and at least one server, the client operating a browser and an operating system, the method comprising the steps of:

downloading a first web page containing at least one link, the link indicating

association a document, by a client from server to which the client is connected and in communications;

selecting the a link on the downloaded web page;

downloading a second web page by a client from the server to which the client is connected and in communications wherein a platform independent executable program is attached to the second web page;

opening a new window of a browser operating on the client;

invoking the platform independent executable program;

invoking at least one server resident process;

scanning the client, by the platform independent executable program to determine if an application to access the document is installed on the client;

providing the requested application on the client if the requested application was not located on the client; and

invoking the application.

22. A method according to claim 21 further comprising the step of providing code which allows the performance of secure operations within the operating system of the client.

23. A method according to claim 21 wherein the step of providing the requested application on the client comprises the steps of;

providing the setup executable associated with the requested application by the server to the client, if the setup executable does not exist on the client;

installing the setup executable file on the client, if the setup executable does not exist on the client;

invoking the setup executable file;

providing of files associated with the requested version of the application by the setup executable from the server to the client; and

installing native components on the client such that the native components do not interfere with the operating system of the client.

24. A method according to claim 21 wherein the step of providing the requested application comprises the steps of:

determining if the version of the application previously installed on the client is the same as the version of the application located on the server; and

5 installing the requested application on the client if the version of the requested application on the client is not the version of the application located on the server.

25. A method according to claim 24 wherein the step of determining if the version of an application installed on a client is the version that is being requested comprises the steps of:

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querying an installation footprint of the installed application to determine the location of the application's files within the memory of the client;

determining the version of the application installed on the client;

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transferring the version information of the application installed on the client to the server; and

comparing the version information of the version of the application installed on the client with version information associated with the version of the application located on the server.

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26. A method for the automatic provision of a requested application from a server to a client; the server and client are elements of a network including at least one client and at least one server, the client operating a browser and an operating system, the method comprising the steps of:

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providing a first page to a client, the first page having a link, the link being associated with a document;

receiving a request for a second web page by way of the client selecting the link associated with the document;

providing the second web page to the client wherein a platform independent executable program is attached to the second web page;

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receiving communications from the platform independent executable program that

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is executing on the client;

invoking a server resident process;

communicating with the platform independent executable program located on the client to facilitate the determination of whether an application to access the document is present on the client;

providing files associated with the requested application to the client for installation of the requested application on the client;

transferring files associated with the application requested by the client to the client for installation of the application on the client; and

invoking the application.

27. A method according to claim 26 wherein the step of providing files comprises the steps of;

providing the setup executable associated with the requested application by the server to the client, if the setup executable does not exist on the client;

installing the setup executable file on the client, if the setup executable does not exist on the client;

invoking the setup executable file;

providing of files associated with the requested version of the application by the setup executable from the server to the client; and

installing native components on the client such that the native components do not interfere with the operating system of the client.

28. A method according to claim 26 wherein the step of providing files comprises the steps of:

comparing the version of the application present on the client with the version information related to the application resident on the server if it was determined that the application was resident on the client; and

transferring files associated with the application requested by the client to the client for installation of the application on the client if the version of the application on

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the client is not the same as the version of the application located on the server.

29. A method according to claim 26 wherein the step of providing files comprises the steps of;

- 5 querying an installation footprint of the installed application to determine the location of the application's files within the memory of the client;
- determining the version of the application installed on the client;
- transferring the version information of the application installed on the client to the server; and
- 10 comparing the version information of the version of the application installed on the client with version information associated with the version of the application located on the server.

30. A computer readable memory element storing the instructions or statements for use in the execution in a computer of a method for the automatic provision of an application from a server to a client; the server and client are elements of a network including at least one client and at least one server, the client operating a browser and an operating system, the method comprising the steps of:

- 15 providing a first page to a client, the first page having a link, the link being associated with a document;
- 20 receiving a request for a second web page by way of the client selecting the link associated with the document;
- providing the second web page to the client wherein a platform independent executable program is attached to the second web page;
- 25 receiving communications from the platform independent executable program that is executing on the client;
- invoking a server resident process;
- communicating with the platform independent executable program located on the client to facilitate the determination of whether an application to access the document is
- 30 present on the client;

providing files associated with the requested application to the client for installation of the requested application on the client;

transferring files associated with the application requested by the client to the client for installation of the application on the client; and

5 invoking the application.

31. Electronic signals for use in the execution in a computer of a method for the automatic provision of a requested application from a server to a client; the server and client are elements of a network including at least one client and at least one server, the client operating a browser and an operating system, the method comprising the steps of:

10 providing a first page to a client, the first page having a link, the link being associated with a document;

receiving a request for a second web page by way of the client selecting the link associated with the document;

15 providing the second web page to the client wherein a platform independent executable program is attached to the second web page;

receiving communications from the platform independent executable program that is executing on the client;

invoking a server resident process;

20 communicating with the platform independent executable program located on the client to facilitate the determination of whether an application to access the document is present on the client;

providing files associated with the requested application to the client for installation of the requested application on the client;

25 transferring files associated with the application requested by the client to the client for installation of the application on the client; and
invoking the application.

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